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Concordia
UNIVERSITY

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The Professional M.B.A.

With its 6,000 students, the Faculty of Commerce and Administration is the largest English language business school in Canada. In addition to a broad undergraduate curriculum comprising several different majors, it offers a wide range of graduate level business degree programmes – the Ph.D. (Administration), the M.Sc. (Administration), the M.B.A., and graduate diploma programmes in Institutional Administration, Sports Administration, and Accountancy.

In responding to the professional business needs of the larger community, the Faculty, under the previous Sir George Williams Administration, introduced the M.B.A. programme in 1968. The programme's success has led more recently to the creation of variations on the M.B.A. model with the implementation of the M.B.A. (Executive Option) in 1985 and the Aviation M.B.A. programme in 1992. To distinguish among the different options, the Faculty now refers to its flagship Master of Business Administration programme as the Professional M.B.A., which, since 1968, has produced almost 2,000 graduates.

The Concordia M.B.A. is a 63-credit programme emphasizing an interdisciplinary general management perspective. This orientation provides students with the expertise they need to become effective business professionals. The programme's overall goal focuses on the achievement of managerial success in an increasingly complex and competitive business environment. The objectives of the programme are to enable students to: (1) integrate the knowledge and skills they have acquired in the principal functional areas of business to achieve overall corporate goals; (2) make decisions which reflect sensitivity to the relationships between the firm and the social, ethical, economic and political environments within which it operates, both locally and internationally; (3) apply the analytical, interpersonal and communication skills necessary for the effective management of human, capital, technical and information resources; (4) refine their career goals and develop the confidence to confront an ever changing business environment.

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Concordia stresses the importance of substantial work experience. Average work experience of students entering the programme is currently 5 years for full-time students and 7 years for part-time students. Admission requirements stress work experience and maturity since the pedagogy of the programme puts students in a position where they learn from one another.

Major changes affecting admission requirements and the overall programme have been implemented since September 1991. For example, there is now no advanced standing offered to applicants even if they have Bachelor of Commerce undergraduate degrees. However, if an applicant's grades are high enough, he or she may receive course substitution. Substitute courses may be selected from the courses within the programme although students are strongly urged to take courses outside the school of business.

The rationale behind this change in policy is that the M.B.A. is not simply an accelerated Commerce degree. This policy puts Concordia Univer-

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sity in alignment with other top schools that tend not to give advanced standing. In addition, it is recognized that successful executives require a breadth of education that extends beyond traditional management courses.

In an attempt to create a more homogeneous background for students coming from a variety of different undergraduate degrees, three qualifying modules are held three to four weeks prior to the beginning of classes. There are two mathematics and one computer module. Exemptions from the mathematics and/or computer modules are given if it can be shown that comparable skills have been acquired elsewhere.

Practical aspects are receiving greater emphasis in the M.B.A. curriculum. There is now more attention given to managerial skills and human skills without jeopardizing the theory or the rigorous nature of the programme. Three new modules have been introduced covering topics such as working effectively in groups, conflict management, communication skills and negotiating skills. These modules are twelve hours each in length and are worth one credit per module.

New and mandatory courses are offered in the second part of the programme in International Business (an interdisciplinary course) and Strategy and the External Environment. A Business Research Paper worth six credits and a research methodology course have always been compulsory. However, students are now given the opportunity of selecting either the business research paper or a practicum project option which assigns students to work in companies to develop real world problem solving strategies.

The Concordia MBA curriculum focuses on learning the principles and application of the various business disciplines within a generalist framework. New students may not necessarily have specific career paths but they are committed to the idea of a managerial career. Although there are no specific specialized options in the programme, students are encouraged to explore their individual areas of interest in their elective choices.

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The programme's admission standards have two overall objectives – to maintain, subject to the university's standards of acceptable quality, a critical mass of students which is sufficient to maintain its richness and diversity and to meet the demands of the larger community for graduates with the necessary conceptual and technical skills. Every effort is made to maintain equity in admissions with respect to sex and to cultural or linguistic origin and, as a consequence, create an interesting, high-achieving, and heterogeneous student population. The outcome of this process is a student body with substantial full-time work experience in a wide range of areas including engineering, medicine, small business, hospital administration, banking, music performance, teaching, accounting, physiotherapy, pharmaceutical research, real estate, and law to name a few. Typically, only about 15% of new admissions have Commerce/Business Administration backgrounds. The programme's current marketing initiatives include targeting suitable applicants such as francophone executives, homemakers wishing to reenter the workforce, and others from previously untapped sources who may have high potential as good M.B.A. students.

The administration of the Concordia M.B.A. reflects the nature of the interdisciplinary curriculum through its regular public information sessions to explain the programme's structure and to answer questions. In addition, a full-time staff member assists the 600-800 people who apply each year by answering telephone enquiries and will set up appointments if necessary. The office, in addition, devotes considerable energy to Placement Services for graduates and is working to strengthen its alumni base. Apart from providing useful support and assistance to students, these efforts are also consistent with maintaining and promoting important private and public sector links with the larger community. One of the most exciting and valuable yearly activities is the annual M.B.A. Case Competition which two years ago went international and recently hosted 24 schools from 6 different countries. To a large extent this event, with the different teams competing in their analyses of complex case problems, epitomizes the value of obtaining a graduate level business education. Senior executives from local, national, and international corporations serve as judges in the four-day competition.

While the majority of MBAs enter business, they do not necessarily work for large corporations. Many are employed by small and medium-size companies or as consultants. Some do not work in business but are employed by a variety of government, social service, health care, community, charitable, and cultural organizations. From both for-profit and non-profit sectors, employers seek people with formal business training to fill their key management roles.

Student Research Areas Reflect Diversity of M.B.A. Programme

by Phil Moscovitch

Four graduating students and the research they are conducting exemplify the flexibility and diversity that are among the strengths of Concordia's Professional MBA Programme. Sylvia Kovats, Randy Mauskopf, John O'Keefe and Gail Small are in the process of completing their MBA Research Projects – one of the last requirements they must fulfil before being granted their degrees.

Sylvia Kovats, who holds an undergraduate degree in physics from the University of North Carolina, entered the MBA Programme in 1988 after having worked fourteen years at Vanier College. She has studied part-time while acting as Treasurer of the First Baptist Church in Montréal and performing with a renaissance music ensemble called Le Dragon Dormant. While she has a background in management – her last two years at Vanier were spent heading the school's computer lab – Kovats' decision to enter the MBA Programme was based more on personal interest than on specific career goals. "I may be a little unusual there," she said.

The privatization of Northwestel, formerly a subsidiary of CN, is the focus of Kovats' MBA Research Project. In 1988 the company, which provides telephone service to the western arctic, was sold to BCE. Using a model for the study of privatizations that she developed, Kovats looked at factors such as changes in decision processes and employee performance along with economic and industry factors, to determine their effect on the company's post-privatization performance.

Although she went into her research with "an open mind", Kovats was surprised by what she learned about Northwestel's strategies and performance following the company's privatization.

Sylvia Kovats

The company has not cut back staff and services in an effort to maximize profits. "They aren't conforming to what most people think privatization will do. They haven't fired a lot of people – in fact they've hired more! They didn't have enough people to do marketing, for instance," Kovats said.

Northwestel's public welfare goals have not changed either. As the company considers an expansion of its service region into the eastern arctic, bringing service to every community of over fifty people remains a priority. "I was really impressed by the company. When you see how much money it costs them to bring phone service to communities of fifty people you think 'this can't be profitable,'" she said. In order to maintain that commitment though, Kovats suspects the cost of local telephone lines may have to increase.

As a crown corporation, Northwestel consistently turned a profit. CN used it as "a cash cow", putting its profits towards reducing the parent company's deficit, Kovats explained. In an effort to maximize short-term gain, the number of Northwestel employees was steadily reduced throughout the eighties, and capital expenditures rose only slightly. Capital expenditures have increased dramatically since the sale, she said. "BCE wants to invest in it and make it a more competitive and long-run company." She added that despite the money spent on improving equipment, "after privatization, profits have improved."

In order to get a clearer picture of the effects of privatization on Northwestel, Kovats travelled to Whitehorse in November of 1992 and spent a week interviewing managers, unionized employees, and the CEO at the company's head office. Although managers and employees were very cooperative, her interviews got off to an unusual start. On the first day, when Kovats spoke to the CEO "he was really evasive and I thought 'there's something wrong – there's something so wrong,'" she said. It turned out the company's computer had broken down, and a week of billing had been lost.

Kovats hopes her work will contribute to a better understanding of successful post-privatization strategies. Her work will form part of a larger study by Associate Professor of Management Rick Molz, who supervised the research. "I didn't just want to write a paper that would never get read. It's going to be useful for something," she said. "By the time we put it all together we'll know a lot more about privatization."

Randy Mauskopf, 26, does not come from a business background, and, as a result, he appreciates the practical orientation of Concordia's Professional MBA Programme. "Although we're very theoretical, we're a case school – we deal with real-life examples. You go out with a very practical, solid base and you can apply it immediately in the working world."

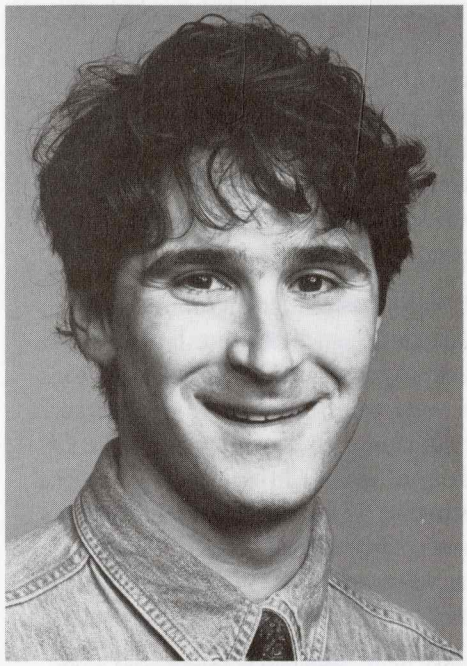
The non-traditional work experience which Mauskopf brings to the programme includes performing as a rock and blues drummer, and managing local music groups. He began work on his MBA in 1990, after having completed a BFA with a Jazz Major at Concordia's Music Department. "It's been a really interesting journey," he commented.

Mauskopf is in the middle of his MBA Research Project work. He is studying the effects of PS 2000, a federal initiative designed to make the public service more client-oriented, accountable and effective. Mauskopf's research will determine what changes the initiative, launched in 1989, has brought to the Department of Transport. "I want to evaluate the extent to which it has achieved its aims," he said.

A source in the public service told Mauskopf that by 1992 the initiative had been largely forgotten. He wants to discover if that is the case, and if so, "I want to know where it broke down, both in terms of implementation and integration – and if it has gone off the rails, how it could be got back on." Mauskopf stressed that in his research project he is looking to measure attitudes, not to carry out a statistical study.

His research is timely, Mauskopf explained: "Everybody's still rushing to make their companies client-oriented. You have to make sure your managers communicate well with subordinates and that front-line employees have the power to make decisions. You have to have an efficiently functioning system. It won't work if people don't communicate, if they don't have the power to make decisions, and if the employees don't understand that customers are their bread and butter." Although he is dealing with the public service and not with a private sector corporation, the same principles apply, he said, particularly since the federal government is in the process of restructuring its ministries along more corporate lines.

In carrying out his research, Mauskopf plans to interview everyone from front-line employees, to strategic managers and information officers within the Department of Transport. He said that Transport Canada has been "very cooperative.



Randy Mauskopf

They themselves laugh and say that that's part of the PS 2000 initiative."

Gail Small, who has been studying full-time since the summer of 1991, has a background in physical education. After receiving her B.Ed from McGill in 1975, she went to work at the Montréal YWCA, where she spent fourteen years. In the two years before starting her MBA she worked with the director of a shelter for battered women. "I'd been managing different services for many many years and I wanted more of a framework on which to hang my hands-on experience," she said.

For her research project, which is in progress, Small is looking at the effects of employment equity programmes on the representation of women in the banking and transportation industries between 1988 and 1991. In 1986 the federal government passed legislation requiring that all industries under federal jurisdiction put employment equity programmes in place. Corporations report to the government on the progress they have made, and the system operates on faith –

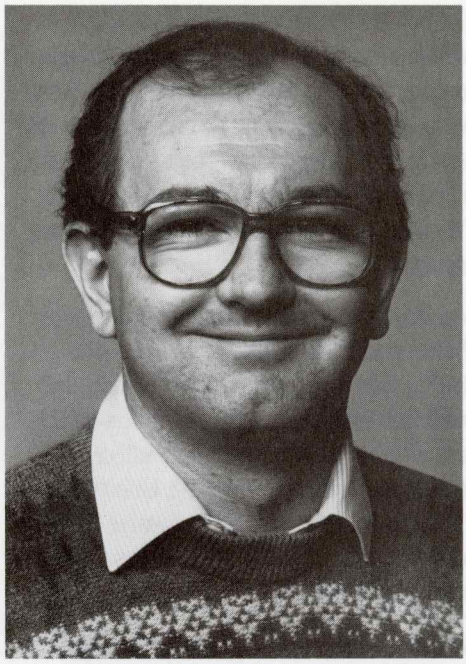
no penalties are imposed for failure to increase representation of the groups the legislation is designed to benefit. The results, Small said, have been "pretty dismal. Considering everything that's been invested to try and make this work it seems the payoff isn't there." In her study she will be looking at some of the reasons for this poor performance.

In terms of women and employment equity, there are important differences between the two sectors Small is studying. The majority of banking employees (approximately 75 percent as of 1991) are women "but they're all crowded into the lower echelons. In banking it's promotional issues that are important. In transportation it's getting women into the industry." In 1991, the last year covered by the study, only eight percent of all transportation employees were women.

Small thinks resistance to employment equity programmes from within corporations may be partly to blame for their lack of success. Only one of the six employment equity managers she spoke to admitted to any resistance within the company, but Small said that, based on studies she has read, she finds it difficult to believe that the problem is not more widespread.

The way in which companies themselves approach their employment equity programmes can have an effect on their degree of success. "Some companies have the flash and the glitter and they put out a lot of newsletters, while others are more concerned with grass roots and trying to change the attitudes of managers." Small noted that one bank has made an effort to overcome any opposition that may exist within the company. It conducted a survey of employees' perceptions of, among other things, the level of education of female employees and the reasons that few women are in upper management positions. "They are showing a commitment to educating people," she said. In general, Small added, "the banking industry seems to be doing a lot of training and education to try to demystify and eliminate old prejudices against women."

In the case of the transportation industry, Small said that one of the problems seems to be that "it's an old boys' industry: I work for the railway



John O'Keefe

and so did my father before me. How do you change an attitude like that? You can't just say you have an employment equity programme and that's enough."

According to Small, one of the reasons corporations should be interested in employment equity is that it's in their own best interests. "Employment equity is not only something socially responsible to do, at this point it's also good business. By the year 2000 there are going to be more women in the workforce. Just to maximize a company's resources you're going to have to hire women."

John O'Keefe, a native of Ireland, began studying full-time in the MBA Programme in September 1991, just two months after his arrival in Canada. A dentist, he holds a Master's degree in Dental Science, and spent seven years working in public health dentistry in Ireland. It was during two of those years, when O'Keefe was a Principal Dental Surgeon in the Irish Health Service, that he realized he wanted to do an MBA. "I realized that I wasn't a particularly good supervisor, and I didn't have the skills to go any higher," he said. "I find the MBA Pro-

gramme at Concordia perfectly complemented my background and gave me what I wanted."

Although he has not worked in the private sector, O'Keefe found that some of the skills he has used in dentistry were helpful to him in his studies. "I found it somewhat difficult to acclimatize myself to the quantitative-type courses, but I found my clinical skills gave me an advantage in people-type courses."

O'Keefe's research, which he hopes to publish, was directly related to his chosen field. He did an econometric study which looked at how three factors – per capita personal disposable income, the dentist/population ratio, and the percentage of the population that is covered by either public or private dental insurance – affected per capita dental expenditure in Québec and Ontario between 1962 and 1991. His goal was to create an econometric model of economic factors affecting per capita dental spending. O'Keefe based his study on one done on the American dental market in 1991, but he believes it is the first econometric model for dental care created to look at the Canadian provincial level.

Surprisingly, O'Keefe found that per capita income seems to bear little relation to the rate of increase of dental expenditures. "The income factor wasn't seen to have a significant impact; it's not what you would expect," he said. On the other hand, the number of people covered by insurance and an increase in the number of dentists seem far more significant. "It's most interesting. The rate of increase in dental expenditures in the sixties and seventies was dramatically higher than in the eighties." The high rate of increase in the seventies corresponds with the period of expansion in public dental insurance as well as with the growth of dental schools. An increase in the number of dentists relative to the population as a whole, O'Keefe explained, could cause dental expenditures to go up as dental care would become more accessible.

But O'Keefe worries that declining levels of insurance coverage in Québec and Ontario may begin to have an effect on dental health. In Québec the number of years for which children are covered by public insurance has been reduced. Meanwhile, in Ontario, the number of people with coverage has dropped as manufacturing jobs decline. Large manufacturers have tended to offer workers dental plans. In addition, dental schools across the country are reducing their admissions. Dental associations, he said, have "lobbied very successfully for quotas on dental school intake." The associations fear that a glut of dentists could reduce their members' incomes.

O'Keefe stressed that his study is exploratory and should not be used as a basis for making wide-ranging predictions. Nevertheless, he feels that it does show the importance of dental insurance. "Dental insurance has been shown to be important, and with any move to reduce dental insurance there would probably be an impact on the earnings of dentists."

Just as they come from different backgrounds, the four students have divergent career goals. Kovats feels that the education she has received in the Programme allows her to consider a range of possibilities; she may look for work either in teaching or in the private sector. She is also considering going on to do a doctorate. Mauskopf hopes eventually to be involved in strategic planning, ideally in the entertainment industry. Small would like to take the skills she has learned at Concordia to either the health care sector or to a community-service organization. And O'Keefe's MBA education has already borne fruit. In May he will start work as a community dental health specialist in Toronto, where he will be involved in coordinating resources and in teaching public health dentistry.

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Upcoming Doctoral Examinations

TEMPLETON, Jennifer
Special Individual Programme/Biology

Date: April 15, 1993 at 2:00 p.m.
Location: H-771, 1455 de Maisonneuve W.
Title: The Use of Personal and Public Information in Foraging Flocks of European Starlings

ZHU, Peiying
Electrical & Computer Engineering

Date: April 20 at 2:00 p.m.
Location: H-771, 1455 de Maisonneuve W.
Title: Motion Analysis from a Sequence of Range Images

LAM, Hing Chum
Mechanical Engineering

Date: April 21 at 1:00 p.m.
Location: H-773, 1455 de Maisonneuve W.
Title: An Experimental Investigation and Dimensional Analysis of Confined Vortex Flows

NICHOLSON, Penelope
Educational Technology

Date: April 30 at 10:00 a.m.
Location: H-769, 1455 de Maisonneuve W.
Title: The Effect of Reward Structure and Group Ability Composition on a Problem-Solving Simulation in an Interactive Video Environment

WHITE, Boyd
Art Education

Date: May 14 at 10:00 a.m.
Location BC-110, 1463 Bishop
Title: Imagination in the Contemplation and Production of Art: An Historical/Critical and Phenomenological Investigation

CHARRON, Ray
Communication

Date May 26, 1992 at 2:00 p.m.
Location: BC-110, 1463 Bishop
Title: A Philosophical Perspective on the Problems and Implications of the Communications Theory of Harold Innis